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### We Bid A Fond Farewell: Generosity of Spirit and Dedication to Helping Others Mark Tenure of Retiring Faculty Members

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## TRIBUTES



Robert I. Reis

Alfred S.  
Konefsky

Dianne Avery



R. Nils Olsen Jr.

Suzanne E.  
TomkinsAnthony H.  
Szczygiel

George M. Hezel



Lynn Mather

# We bid a fond farewell

*Generosity of spirit and dedication to helping others  
mark tenure of eight retiring faculty members*

**T**hese eight individuals have truly shaped our Law School. When we think of the features of our institution that are most distinctive, the things that bring the most pride in being part of UB, we are reminded in countless ways of their efforts and contributions over many years.

Thanks to them, our Law School has tried to stand for something special. We've aspired to the highest values of service, self-sacrifice and intellectual innovation. They have been generous to colleagues and have helped many to become part of the academic community and to realize our potential as scholars and teachers. They have spent countless hours reading our work, offering support and encouragement, and guiding us past barriers and obstacles.

Thousands of alumni recall that their student experiences at UB were exciting and inspiring because they associate their best memories as students with these eight individuals. They are an important part of the public face of our Law School, and their stellar reputation has contributed substantially to our favorable recognition in the world of legal academia and in our community. But most of all, I think of their generosity of spirit and their dedication to helping others.

With gratitude and affection,  
David M. Engel  
SUNY Distinguished Service Professor

**Editor's note:** *The retirement of eight faculty is unprecedented in our history, and we want to recognize and salute Robert I. Reis, Alfred S. Konefsky, Dianne Avery, R. Nils Olsen Jr., Suzanne E. Tomkins, Anthony H. Szczygiel, George M. Hezel and Lynn Mather. In the spring issue of the Forum we published tributes to four in order of their length of service on the faculty. The remaining four are lauded in this fall issue.*

— ILENE FLEISCHMANN, EDITOR

## International trailblazer

**S**uzanne E. Tomkins '92 is a trailblazer, a consensus-builder, a model advocate and a gifted educator. She changed the landscape for domestic violence victims locally while also impacting legal responses throughout the country and in Ukraine, Russia and Brazil. She always saw the next issue to be addressed before others recognized it. As co-director of the Family Law Program, she ensured that new lawyers addressed intimate partner violence whenever it was present in family law matters. The ripples of her work are wide and deep.

Tomkins and Dr. Catherine Cerulli started the Domestic Violence Task Force as law students at SUNY Buffalo Law School in 1990, and Tomkins served as its faculty adviser for over 20 years. The task force has provided advocacy in Family Court in collaboration with Haven House (the local battered women's shelter) and the Erie County Bar's Volunteer Lawyers Project.

Tomkins and Cerulli started the Women, Children and Social Justice Clinic (formerly the Family Violence Clinic) in 1992. Students obtained a practice order to assist local prosecutors, victims seeking protective orders, victims in matrimonial and custody matters and immigrants who self-petition for relief under VAWA.

Tomkins and Cerulli co-supervised students in groundbreaking empirical research and evaluation of intervention models. Protocols developed by the clinic with partners in Niagara County, N.Y., became a model for protocols in several other New York counties. Recently, the clinic created a searchable online database identifying emergency animal shelters for victims who could not take their pets with them into shelter, overcoming a barrier to victim safety. The clinic joined forces with other law schools in a campaign to recognize domestic violence as a human rights violation.

Tomkins worked with the Community and Economic De-



**Suzanne E. Tomkins '92**

*Clinical Professor*

velopment and Housing Clinics and the YWCA of Niagara to address the economic underpinnings of violence. They collaborated to build Carolyn's House, a comprehensive housing program for homeless women and children in Niagara Falls, N.Y., virtually all of whom have been victims of intimate partner violence.

In January 2011 in Orchard Park, N.Y., Dr. Muzzamil Hassan killed his wife, Assiya, while his children waited in the parking lot of their TV station. Tomkins and clinic co-director Remla Parthasarathy led the communication effort of the local domestic violence community so that it was a strong, informed and unified voice.

Tomkins led a similar communication and education effort when the local district attorney announced that he would no longer prosecute misdemeanors and violations in the Integrated Domestic Violence Court, calling the court a "failed experiment." Tomkins educated the public about the dangerousness of low-level offenses in the cy-

cle of violence. Under court order, the cases were resumed.

Tomkins was sponsored by the American Bar Association's Rule of Law Project to travel to Russia to educate attorneys, judges and law enforcement officials. She did similar work in Ukraine. For six years, one or two feminist-practicing attorneys from Central and Eastern European countries came to study with Professor Isabel Marcus and Tomkins. Prosecutors from Brazil also studied in Tomkins' clinic, and she went to Brazil as their offices began to prosecute cases under the first laws criminalizing domestic violence in Brazil.

Tomkins' work through the Women, Children and Social Justice Clinic changed the response to intimate partner violence in our community. By training the next generation of advocates here and around the world, her work will have infinite and endless impact.

— Professor Susan V. Mangold



*"Suzanne Tomkins changed the landscape for domestic violence victims locally while also impacting legal responses throughout the country and in Ukraine, Russia and Brazil." — Professor Susan V. Mangold*

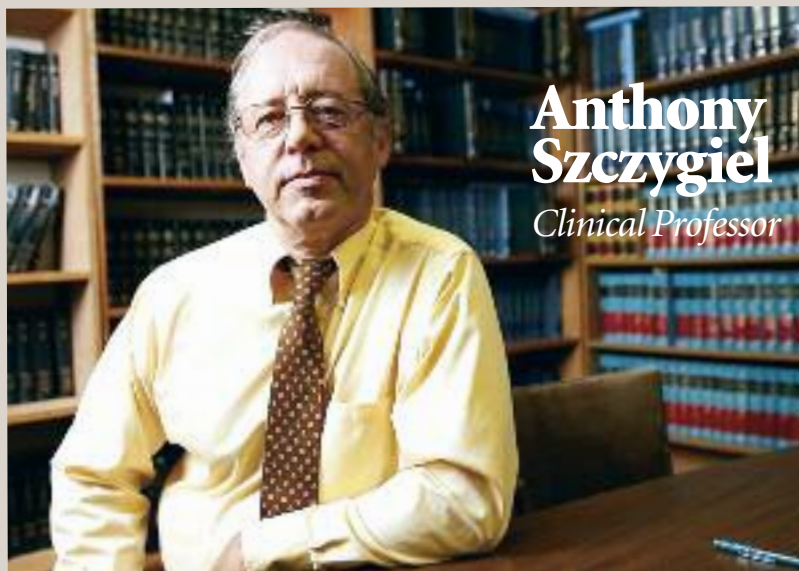
## Advocate for the elderly

I first met **Tony Szczygiel** in 1981, when he was interviewing for a position on our faculty. Tony impressed me immediately. He was keenly intelligent, with a demonstrated commitment to working with underserved communities, having spent five years working for Farmworker's Legal Services.

Tony is the exemplar for the effective community engagement a thoughtful, sophisticated and empathetic clinical teacher can provide. During his 34 years at UB, he developed a sophisticated educational program that profoundly impacted provision of legal services to an ever growing and often financially challenged, elderly population.

Tony's program is centered in his masterful clinical teaching. Over the years, scores of law students have worked with Tony, representing the elderly poor. Under his supportive supervision, students perfect interviewing skills necessary to elicit legally significant facts from often confused individuals, as well as the subtle art of actually listening to prospective clients. In his teaching, Tony listens closely, without interruption, and thinks before replying. This trait, which operates so effectively in the classroom, is imparted to his students by example. In a profession that seems sometimes to validate the caricature of windy, blowhard lawyers, this is a valued skill.

In addition, Tony teaches his students effectively to counsel the elderly. His clinic handles complicated, and often intertwined, questions, including: Medicaid eligibility; Medicare Parts A, B, C and D; VA insurance benefits; private insurance impacted by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; long term health insurance; home nursing care; nursing home finance; and eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income. Tony has effectively



balanced demands for repetitive, though highly desired, individual representation against broadly based, impact litigation that may prove life-changing for many. Tony's students have appeared in hundreds of fair hearings and administrative tribunals on behalf of individual clients, while also successfully pursuing complex litigation. This balance has been a hallmark of his clinical teaching.

Tony's impact litigation provides unmatched educational experience. The seemingly never-ending case of *Conrad v. Perales*, which lasted an astonishing and depressing 21 years, is an excellent example of his complex litigation, not to mention his inexhaustible patience. This class action alleged that 16,000 nursing home residents were cheated out of insurance co-payments, deductibles and other costs when New York State charged them twice for the same services. Plaintiffs ultimately received an \$11 million settlement; however, sadly, most of his frail clients died during the lengthy proceedings, and the settlement ultimately was distributed to their heirs, a cogent lesson for his students on the limits of such lawsuits. Not insignificantly for the future of his clinic, \$2.3 million in attorney fees was awarded.

Tony's civic engagement has not been limited to the classroom and courtroom. He has been instrumental in organizing and continuing the education of an ever-

increasing "elder law" specialty. For example, he founded the Coalition of Medicaid Advocates, affectionately known as COMA, prepared and distributed voluminous materials discussing recent statutory and case law, and participated on panels too numerous to recount.

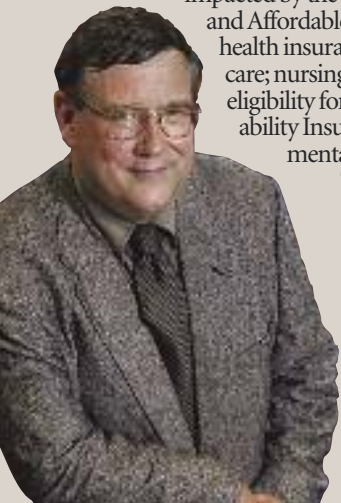
In addition, Tony has worked tirelessly on behalf of Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled, and Disadvantaged. His students assist in intake at their office, and he has co-counseled with their attorneys, sharing fee awards with the financially challenged program.

In short, Tony has worked successfully to improve the quality of advocacy available to the elderly. This is precisely the activity UB 20/20 envisioned in its strategic strength of Civic Engagement and Public Policy, the linchpin of any great state university.

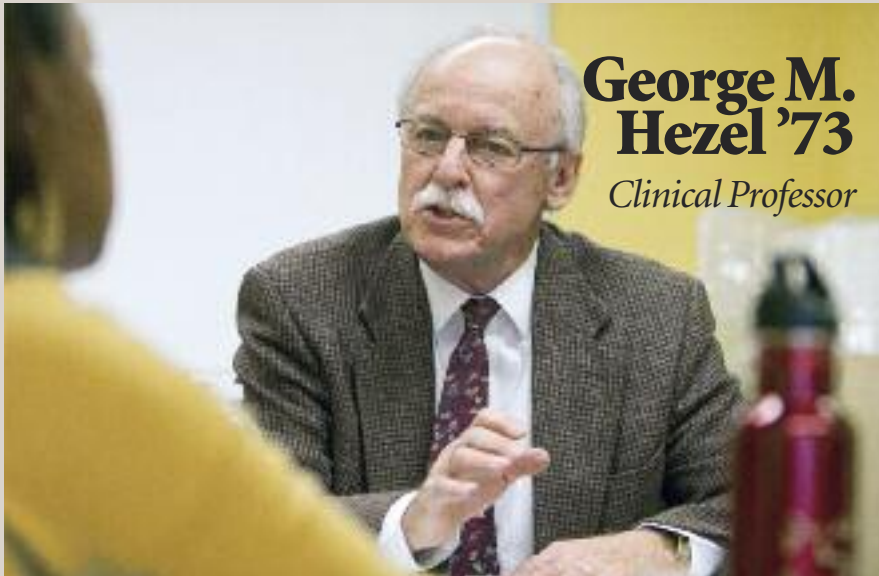
Finally, I acknowledge Tony's compassion and willingness to assist colleagues concerning matters such as home health services and insurance coverage of nursing and hospice care during family crises. I will never forget his empathetic and wise counsel during my father's terminal illness. I am privileged to call Tony a friend. When he reflects on his contributions during his retirement, he will indeed have a great deal to be proud of.

— Professor R. Nils Olsen Jr.

*"Tony listens closely, without interruption, and thinks before replying. This trait, which operates so effectively and respectfully in Tony's teaching, is imparted to his students by example." — Professor and former Dean R. Nils Olsen Jr.*







**George M. Hezel '73**

*Clinical Professor*

## *Lawyer, teacher, friend*

**W**hen I arrived at the Law School in the fall of 1989 to work with **George M. Hezel '73** in the recently created Affordable Housing Clinic, he suggested that I take a look at Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code, which contained the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. At the time, this provision was a little used or understood temporary measure passed as a part of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. George thought we might be able to use it as both an educational tool for our students and to create afford-

able housing in Western New York. Since then, George has worked with students, community organizations, banks, prospective tenants, government officials, politicians, consultants, equity investors and accountants to bring more affordable housing to Western New York. Most of our work together involved the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, which soon became a critical part of developing affordable housing throughout the country.

The more obvious and tangible re-

sult of his work consists of over 2,000 units of affordable housing which have been built with the assistance of the Affordable Housing Clinic over the past 25 years. The more lasting and impressive part of George's legacy are the many former students he inspired to go into this field. They will continue to contribute to the lives of countless future residents of affordable housing for many years to come.

George was fond of re-

minding students that Section 42 is the longest section of the Internal Revenue Code. Navigating the provisions of this law to the satisfaction of banks, private equity investors and state officials required legal precision and sophistication. Accomplishing this task with students required patience and extraordinary teaching skill. Insisting this could be done at all in a law school setting required vision, determination in the face of disappointment, salesmanship and audacity. George was perfect for the job.

George's persistence and optimism fueled his success. Often, when a particular project seemed doomed, George would energetically pursue alternatives until he found a successful path to closing. Throughout this process, he was always positive and upbeat.

I watched George gain the confidence of key constituencies needed to build affordable housing. He worked in abandoned school basements on the East Side of Buffalo, in bank offices and in state offices here and in Albany. George could work with each of these groups and, more importantly, get them to work with each other. Even when thoroughly frustrated, he searched for a way forward by considering the legitimate interests of all constituents. In this role, George wasn't just building affordable housing, he was building bridges in our community.

George recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York State Association for Affordable Housing and was awarded the inaugural University at Buffalo Community Partners Award. These awards represent the respect, admiration and affection that so many of his colleagues and former students feel for George as a lawyer, teacher and friend.

— *Clinical Professor Emeritus*  
Thomas Disare



*“The more obvious and tangible result of his work consists of over 2,000 units of affordable housing which have been built with the assistance of the Affordable Housing Clinic over the past 25 years.*

*The more lasting and impressive part of George's legacy are the many former students he inspired to go into this field.”*

— *Clinical Professor Emeritus Thomas Disare*



## *The gold standard for studying the legal profession*

**L**ynn Mather has been a key contributor to the intellectual life of SUNY Buffalo Law School, a person of principle, and one of our most honored and respected scholars. Her colleagues have benefited immeasurably from her encouragement and advice, and her students have been enriched by her wealth of knowledge about law, legislation, and the legal profession. Lynn has been a mentor and friend to new faculty mem-

bers and a valued source of advice to those who are further along in their careers. Her departure leaves a void that will be very difficult to fill.

For more than 40 years, Lynn Mather has been one of the most recognized, respected and influential figures in the international Law and Society field. Her studies of lawyers and the legal profession, in particular, are considered the gold standard by her peers. She has re-

ceived many awards and other forms of recognition for her writings and her leadership, including election to the presidency of the Law & Society Association in 2001-02. In 2013, her contributions and outstanding reputation were recognized by the State University of New York with her promotion to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Service Professor.

Lynn came to SUNY Buffalo Law

School in 2002 as the result of an international search for the next director of the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy. She had spent most of her professional career at Dartmouth College, where she was the Nelson A. Rockefeller Professor of Government. We were thrilled to have her join us here at UB, and she began to have an impact on faculty and students almost from the moment she arrived. Although she was hired primarily in an administrative capacity, she is a skilled teacher who immediately made her mark in the law school classroom teaching courses on the legal profession, statutory interpretation, courts and social change, and other courses and seminars dealing with Law and Society topics. As a political scientist, she also taught and mentored graduate students and fostered dialogues across the disciplines on our campus.

Colleagues at UB came to know Lynn for her extraordinarily generous and selfless support of faculty scholarship. One of her innovations at the Baldy Center, the Book Manuscript Workshop for UB authors, brought noted scholars to our campus to lead discussions of books that were nearing completion. Many faculty members later commented that these sessions had contributed significantly to the success and visibility of their work. Lynn herself is a meticulous reader who has provided many of us with detailed comments on our work, a role she has played for scholars around the world.

Lynn has been a dedicated member of our faculty, never hesitant to speak her mind, always devoted to the betterment of our community. The dozen years she spent with us seem far too short. Her countless contributions to our faculty, our students and our international reputation will be sorely missed.

— SUNY  
Distinguished  
Service  
Professor David  
M. Engel



*“Lynn Mather has been one of the most recognized, respected and influential figures in the international Law and Society field. Her studies of lawyers and the legal profession, in particular, are considered the gold standard by her peers.”*

— SUNY Distinguished Service Professor David M. Engel